

US monitors to help draw ME peace 'roadmap'

AFP, Aqaba, Jordan

The United States will send a team of monitors led by a senior diplomat to the Middle East to help Israel and the Palestinians coordinate the implementation of the so-called "road map" for peace, President George W. Bush said yesterday.

"We will place a mission on the ground led by Ambassador John Wolf," Bush said after meeting here with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel

Sharon, Palestinian premier Mahmoud Abbas and Jordan's King Abdullah II.

"This mission will be charged with helping the parties to move towards peace, monitoring their progress and stating clearly who is fulfilling their responsibilities," Bush said.

He said he was also asking his Secretary of State Colin Powell and National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice to make the

cause of Israeli-Palestinian peace a matter of the highest priority.

They would work closely with the respective authorities, "helping them to move towards true peace as quickly as possible," Bush added.

It was not immediately clear how many people would be working under Wolf, but officials said they would all come from the State Department or the US intelligence community.

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FM rejects AL plea to change nomination of SQ Chy

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan yesterday turned down Awami League's request to change the nomination of Salauddin Quader Chowdhury as candidate for secretary general of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC).

"This is a very unusual request...it cannot be accepted. Indeed, it's not a request, but a wishful demand," he told reporters at the foreign ministry.

The minister sidestepped a question on an allegation of the politician's anti-Bangladesh activities but said, "Our politics is not to divide the nation, but to look forward."

"It was 30 years ago...we the politicians try to put the nation's clock back... History cannot be a

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PHOTO: STAR

The World Environment Day to be observed today reinforces the need to check onslaughts on the environment. However, showing total disregard to environmental concern, real estate builders have razed a hill to start a housing project in Sylhet as a signboard shows.

Environment Day today

UNB, Dhaka

The World Environment Day will be observed in the country as elsewhere in the world today.

This year's theme of the day is "Water -- two billion people are dying for it."

Environment and Forest Ministry and Environment Department have drawn up elaborate programmes, including environmental fair and discussion, on the occasion.

The main programme of the day will be held at Nachol in Chapainawabganj district. Prime Minister Khaleda Zia will inaugurate the programme.

Environment and Forest Minister Shajahan Siraj, State Minister Jafrul Islam Chowdhury, Syed Monzur Hossain MP and Resident Representative of UNDP Jorgen Lissner will be present there.

President Iajuddin Ahmed, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and

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Underpowered force led to cop death in Agargaon shootout

'Pichchi' Hannan escapes, 2 arrested 'criminals' remanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The two criminals arrested during Tuesday night's shootout at Agargaon that left Sub-inspector Humayun Kabir Patwari and one 'criminal' dead yesterday were remanded for five days.

Three cases for murder, unauthorised possession of arms and carrying drugs were filed yesterday with the Mohammadpur Police Station against Pichchi Hannan, Sanga Babu, Nitel, Masum and Ainul. Of the five, Masum and Aynul were arrested from the spot while the others managed to escape.

Police recovered 1,040 bottles of Phensidyl, 24 bullets of .32 calibre revolver and 9mm pistol, four spent bullets and a revolver magazine from the spot. Besides, a car (Dhaka Metro- Ga 12-0629) and a motorcycle (Dhaka Metro- Gha 12-6326) were also recovered.

Police also rounded up 56 people from different slums at Agargaon and sent them to the court yesterday. The court later released them.

Meanwhile, the slain criminal was identified as Amir Hamza alias Hamzu, 34, owner of a restaurant, Café Shaan, at Mirpur-10 intersec

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Humayun Kabir



PHOTO: AFP

US President George W. Bush (C) looks on as Palestinian Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas (L) shakes hands with his Israeli counterpart Ariel Sharon after a press conference yesterday in the Red Sea resort of Aqaba, Jordan.

AL to convey its concern to OIC envoys

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The main opposition Awami League (AL) will meet ambassadors of the Organisation of Islamic Conference member states to Dhaka soon to convey its concern over the nomination of a controversial politician for the OIC top office.

The government's nomination of the prime minister's parliamentary affairs adviser, Salauddin Quader Chowdhury, as candidate for secretary general of the Riyadh-based OIC, elicited criticism from the opposition.

On June 2, the AL sent a letter to the prime minister, urging her to hold back Salauddin Quader from the race.

"We will meet the OIC states' ambassadors to Dhaka soon and express our concern," AL General

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Drizzle brings relief to city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Smarting under a fortnight of severe heat spell, the capital experienced a light drizzle yesterday afternoon.

The coastal zone and hilly regions of the country, however, experienced a triggering of showers.

"In the next couple of days, we expect rain and thunder showers all over the country," a met office source said.

The met officials expect the monsoon to begin by June 7. The Dhakaites welcomed the mild rain after the stuffy heat.

The heat wave had already taken its toll claiming 20 lives. Hundreds others fell into various illnesses because of the heat.

The highest rainfall of the country was 72 millimetres at Teknaf and the highest temperature, 38.1 degrees Celsius, was at Chuadanga district.

The highest temperature at Dhaka was 34.8 degrees Celsius while the lowest 26.7 degrees.

The rainfall measured at Dhaka was 6 millimetres.

The met office forecast rain and

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Saifur's visit to India Morshed rejects rumours on gas export

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan yesterday outright rejected speculations over any discussion or understanding on export of natural gas or transshipment facilities to India during Finance Minister Saifur Rahman's recent visit to New Delhi.

"These issues were not even raised by India," the foreign minister told reporters at the Foreign Ministry.

On the Indian proposal for Free Trade Agreement with Bangladesh, Khan said this is a matter of global trend and "we need to understand it" since it is new to Bangladesh.

Speaking on the issue of gas, the foreign minister referred to his

recent discussion with Indian External Affairs Minister Yashwant Sinha in London on the fringe of the CMAA meeting and quoted Sinha as having said that the question of exporting gas is an internal matter of Bangladesh.

If Bangladesh decides to sell its surplus gas, India would be willing to buy it, Khan quoted Sinha as saying.

Explaining the government position on gas, the foreign minister said the government would consider the issue of gas export only if there is any surplus after meeting domestic and ensuring a reserve for future.

Replying to a question on the

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BNP lawmaker Nurul Amin passes away

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) lawmaker Nurul Amin Talukder died of heart ailments at Scoot Hospital in New Delhi yesterday morning.

Talukder, a valiant freedom fighter, was elected from Netrokona-3 constituency in three consecutive general elections, the 6th, 7th and 8th -- of the Jatiya Sangsad.

Born in February 1946, the late parliamentarian had been in police service for 20 years. His body arrives today.

Talukder left behind wife, three sons, mother and a host of relatives, friends, colleagues and admirers to mourn his death.

He joined the BNP on June 19 in 1995 and was the member of BNP's National Executive Committee.

Also the chairman of Rainbow Group, Talukder was the company commander at Sector No. 11 during the Liberation War.

He established several educational institutions and was associated with various socio-cultural and sports organisations.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia meanwhile expressed deep shock at the death of Talukder.

In her condolence message, she said the country lost a committed politician and a senior parliamentarian. The PM prayed for the salvation of the departed soul and conveyed sympathy to the bereaved family.

BNP Secretary General and LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan also expressed profound shock at his death.

Our Netrokona correspondent adds that local BNP announced a 3-day mourning programme.

Cook, caretaker prime suspects in Sultana Panni murder

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detectives yesterday said they have identified the killers of Sultana Panni, wife of former deputy speaker Humayun Khan Panni.

The killers are cook Alauddin, caretaker Mamun and two local youths Nasir and Emdad, detectives claimed.

According to the detectives, looting money and valuables was the motive behind the murder.

Sultana Panni was strangled in her bedroom during the early hours of May 18 at her Dhanmondi residence.

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The investigation is complete and the charge sheet will soon be filed, sources said.

According to Assistant Commissioner (AC) of Detective Branch Akhtaruzzaman, Alauddin, who had obtained the job only four months before the incident, allegedly masterminded the plot and persuaded Mamun to join him.

"Alauddin had a track record of stealing as well," the AC said.

The two goons, Nasir and Emdad, were hired following the information that Sultana kept a good amount of money in the house.

Keraniganj JCD leader gunned down near police station

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Armed assailants gunned down a Jatiyatubadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) leader near his residence at East Katuria close to the Keraniganj Police Station yesterday.

Lafani Chowdhury, 30, vice-president of the Keraniganj JCD unit, was sprayed with bullets at around 11:30am.

Police could not give details about the killing immediately. Family members however said he was killed because of enmity with some locals.

The assailants attacked Lafani when he was talking with a friend on the road in front of his house. A gang of eight armed youths suddenly appeared and fired indiscriminately. The JCD leader collapsed on the ground.

He was taken to Mitford hospital where he was declared dead on arrival.

Following the killing, JCD activities vandalised several vehicles and shops in the locality. A tense situation was prevailing in the area and additional police forces were

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Quake jolts Chittagong

BSS, Chittagong

A 22-second earthquake yesterday shook the port city at 7-17 pm.

Geophysical observatory recorded the intensity of the quake as 4.1 on the Richter scale. The epicentre of the quake was located 203 kilometers off the city.

Police and fire services sources said none was killed or injured during the quake. No damage was also reported.

BB tightens grip on money market to avert volatility

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Bank (BB) Governor Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed yesterday said the central bank has tightened its grip over the money market to avert possible volatility in foreign exchange rate.

"As the money market was tightened, call money rate shot up. Now we are looking into measures of bringing down the call money rate within two to three days," he said while speaking as chief guest at a working session on 'Financial Sector Reforms' of the three-day National Policy Review Forum 2003.

The governor said the market has so far behaved normally and the central bank will remain vigilant.

Commenting on the market's reaction on the floating exchange

rate, Bangladesh Bank Deputy Governor Nazrul Huda said some of the banks had been selling and buying foreign currencies beyond the BB's band and the central bank did not intervene.

"In fact, floating exchange rate was in effect even before we introduced it officially. As the central bank dried up the money market, the call money rate shot up. We hope the money market will become normal within a few days," he added.

Huda said having enough market controlling instruments, not foreign exchange reserves, is vital to checking any volatility.

The call money rate rose as high as 41 per cent following introduction of the floating exchange rate on May 31. The rate ranged between 16 and 20 per cent yesterday.



PHOTO: STAR

Mamun, Emdad and Nasir, left to right, after arrest yesterday by detectives for alleged involvement in the killing of Sultana Panni in Dhanmondi.

Peace talks must include Pak-held Kashmir: Vajpayee

REUTERS, New Delhi

India's prime minister has said peace talks with Pakistan must include the dispute over all of Kashmir, including the third controlled by Pakistan, local news agencies reported yesterday.

"If we are to start talks with Pakistan, then we have to start with that part of Kashmir which is under Pakistani occupation," the Press Trust of India quoted Atal Behari Vajpayee as saying.

India controls almost a half of Kashmir and China also holds a small percentage.

Vajpayee also said that talks between the two nuclear-armed rivals could only begin after Islamabad cracked down on Muslim militants operating from its soil in mainly Muslim Kashmir.

"Talks can start only after cross-border terrorism ends," PTI quoted Vajpayee, who had returned from talks with G8 leaders, as saying.

India and Pakistan have fought two of their three wars since inde-

pendence in 1947 over Kashmir, and went to the bring of a fourth last year, after a bloody attack on the Indian parliament which New Delhi blamed on Pakistan-based Kashmiri militants.

Vajpayee launched a new peace initiative with Pakistan in April, restoring full diplomatic relations and bus and air links as a prelude to peace talks.

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
June 5		6-43 pm
June 6	5-11 am	

Prayer Timings		
June 5		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-15	4-45
Zohr	1-00	1-30
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-45	6-50
Esha	8-15	8-45

Source: Islamic Foundation